



**Quarterly Report**  
**ALBANIA: POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT AND**  
**PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**  
**USAID Cooperative Agreement No. EE-A-00-98-00028-00**  
**October 1 to December 31, 2001**

**I. SUMMARY**

Albanian parliamentary elections in June were the first since snap 1997 elections were called following widespread rioting due to collapsed pyramid schemes. In 1997, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) oversaw the elections, and Italian peacekeeping troops patrolled ballot stations. During this election, violent political rhetoric was considerably toned down and candidates began to conduct issue-based campaigns. The relatively positive climate of the 2001 election cycle demonstrates a growing ability to attain democratic norms among political parties in Albania and indicates progress in the country's democratic transition. However, issues still remain among and within the parties, as evidenced by the refusal of the coalition Union for Victory to participate in parliament as well as the current leadership crisis in the Socialist Party between Prime Minister Ilir Meta and Socialist Party Chairman Fatos Nano.

With the goal of promoting citizen participation and strengthening political parties as representative institutions, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) through its political party and civic forum programs in Albania has pursued the following objectives: citizens understand and engage in the political process; approximately 120 emerging political party leaders and activists acquire party building and election preparation skills that favor their development as future political leaders; and party outreach to the electorate is strengthened through increased levels of participation and responsibility among youth activists in party structures and decisionmaking. NDI has provided training to political parties through its multiparty Political Leadership Development Program (ZHUP) and in separate single-party seminars, assisting candidates and activists as they increased their political participation and prepared for elections. NDI's Civic Forum program, which seeks to engage citizens at the grassroots level in discussions on democratic principles and advocacy techniques on issues of local concern, has expanded to a third geographic area and has created an innovative evaluation tool to assess program progress.

In this quarter, NDI conducted the following activities:

**Civic Forum**

- Civic Forum published the second issue of its quarterly newsletter; and
- NDI continued work on the Civic Forum evaluation, analyzing the data and combining it with information from focus groups.

## **ZHUP**

- NDI consultant Roy Dooney (Ireland) met with political parties and discussed the parliamentary election results as well as the future of the individual parties; and
- The fourth Regional ZHUP seminar series, focusing on party branch development, was conducted with all four regional groups.

NDI observed the following results this quarter:

## **Civic Forum**

- Civic Forum achieved its goal of working with more than 100 citizens' groups in the districts of Tirana, Durres and Kavaje;
- Civic Forum field coordinators organized a first-ever meeting of citizens in Durres, at which approximately 150 people attended.
- Several Tirana area citizen groups have begun to see the effects of long-term advocacy efforts. Zhallher has secured equipment from the Ministry of Health for the local health care center. Unaza worked with the mini-municipality and the electric company to obtain a transformer. Ndroq lobbied the Ministry of Local Government and received furniture for the commune office.

## **ZHUP**

- All Regional ZHUP participants completed and handed in their draft voter outreach projects, which will be implemented in their party branches.

During this quarter, NDI received a no-cost extension on its USAID regional cooperative agreement through July 31, 2002, under which the Albania program is funded, to continue to pursue the aforementioned objectives. NDI anticipates completing activities in Albania, however, by March 31, 2002.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Following a relatively stable post-election period, Albanian politics took a downward turn in late autumn when strong divisions within the Socialist Party (SP) threatened to split the ruling party and force early parliamentary elections. In late October, Socialist Chairman Fatos Nano declared his candidacy for the presidency despite known internal opposition from the party executive level, including Prime Minister Ilir Meta. In a bid to enlist rank-and-file party members to his cause and undercut executive-level resistance, Nano launched a campaign at party branches around the country, turning on his party's government and Prime Minister Ilir Meta by declaring a "moral crisis within the SP leadership." His mounting accusations of corruption and calls for early elections prompted harsh rebuttals from Meta and an extraordinary meeting of the party's Steering Committee in early December.

The three-day meeting, broadcast nationwide, served to tarnish the party's image further and lower popular confidence in the political elite as the public witnessed the SP leadership's personal and open attacks on one another. As a result of the party's failure to contain the conflict between Nano and Meta supporters, three ministers in Meta's camp were forced to resign the following week, and a fourth quit. Following the government shuffle, the ratification of Meta's chosen replacements was blocked by a parliamentary boycott by deputies loyal to Nano. Distracted by its leadership struggle and public relations failure, the Socialist Party's long-awaited entrance into the Socialist International in December went uncelebrated.

News of the political drama unfolding in the SP overshadowed progress on ending an opposition boycott of parliament over allegations of manipulation and fraud in the June 2001 parliamentary elections. In October, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights released its final election report, acknowledging general progress but noting widespread irregularities and manipulation in the voting process. The report's findings fueled the opposition Democratic Party's (DP) agitation for reruns in contested election zones. The ruling SP chose to focus on the OSCE's recommendation that the opposition return to parliament to participate in creating a joint commission that would investigate electoral complaints and enact needed electoral law reforms.

Continued pressure from the international community and parliamentary parties yielded results in November, when ranking party officials of opposition parties<sup>1</sup> indicated a willingness to return to parliament. Disregarding his opposition colleagues, Democratic Party president and opposition coalition leader Sali Berisha called for rallies around the country to protest the government's mandate and widespread corruption. He reversed his position, however, after a visit to the United States, and announced his willingness to join parliament on condition of certain guarantees from the Socialists. By the end of the year, no significant action had been taken by either side to establish a joint commission to investigate election irregularities.

The political situation demonstrates a need in Albania for both increased transparency and citizen participation in the political system. In this context, NDI has continued to work with emerging political party leaders through its Political Leadership Development Program (ZHP), and with citizens as they learn about and begin to participate in the political system through the Civic Forum program. Since 1999, ZHP has provided emerging political party leaders with practical training on election campaign planning, media skills, and direct voter contact in multiparty settings. The national and regional ZHP programs have helped cultivate a new body of reform-minded and skilled young leaders across Albania. NDI's Civic Forum program encourages citizens disconnected from their government as a result of political and governmental controversies to become more involved in the democratic process in their communities.

### **III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

#### **Civic Forum**

##### ***Citizen Discussion Groups***

In this period Civic Forum continued to conduct discussion groups with 100 citizen groups, reaching approximately 1,500 citizens in the districts of Kavaje, Durrës and Tirana. Discussion groups focused on such topics as decentralization, the responsibilities of elected representatives and citizens, the role of nongovernmental organizations in a democratic

"We have made people aware of the [Civic Forum] program; how to vote, how all people need to get organized, how we can ignore political affiliations."

- *Civic Forum participant in the village of Sauk, Tirana District*

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<sup>1</sup> DP General Secretary Rivdan Bode, Deputy Chairman Jozefina Topalli of the DP, and the chair of the Republican Party, a key ally of the DP in the opposition coalition.

political system, and the role of political parties in a democracy, as well as advocacy. During this quarter 15 new discussion groups were formed, and an additional number of groups moved from the education phase into the advocacy phase. Also during this quarter, field coordinator teams organized 15 pilot secondary school student groups (three per field coordinator team).

### ***Deployment of Civic Forum Director***

In December, NDI deployed its new Civic Forum Director, Jennifer Butz, for a period of orientation with departing director Mary Margaret Dineen. Butz was introduced to the field coordinators, attended Friday staff meetings, observed field coordinators in the field, and discussed administrative matters with the management team. Before joining NDI, Butz worked with indigenous NGOs in Asia, the Newly Independent States and Eastern Europe in the areas of economic development, organizational sustainability and advocacy. Most notably, she directed a USAID-funded program in Mongolia to educate citizens and NGOs in political participation and advocacy at the local level.

### ***Civic Forum Newsletter***

Civic Forum published the second of its quarterly newsletters in this period. The edition reflects an overall improvement in the reporting style of the Civic Forum staff due to work with NDI resident representatives on objective and professional report writing. Articles featured beginning advocacy efforts of citizen groups, including a women's group in the village of Fushas that has organized to improve water distribution and rehabilitate a local health center. Other articles covered the expansion of Civic Forum into the district of Kavaje, Civic Forum's collaboration with other nongovernmental organizations, the June retreat with Kosovo Civic Forum staff, and the experience of Civic Forum participants who participated in a study mission to Bulgaria in April, sponsored by World Learning.

### ***Staff Development***

Civic Forum field coordinators (FCs) continued to meet on Fridays to receive training in curriculum content, team-building, and facilitation skills. Field coordinators who have worked with Civic Forum since its inception in late 1999 are assuming greater responsibility for the training of their newer colleagues. In this period, veteran FCs trained junior staff in leading discussions on decentralization, the responsibilities of elected representatives and citizens, the role of nongovernmental organizations in a democracy, and the role of political parties in a democratic political system.

In addition to training, staff meetings serve as a forum to discuss laws and regulations that impact the work of Civic Forum. This period, staff reviewed the Freedom of Information Act, the Procedural Administration Code of the American Bar Association's Central and Eastern Europe Law Initiative (ABA-CEELI), and a new Center for the Victims of Corruption supported by Management Systems International.

In October, the staff participated in a two-day training conducted by the Albanian National Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center (ANTTARC) on conflict resolution and communication and feedback skills, using various models for good communication. ANTTARC conducted a third training on team-building with all national staff in December.

### ***Civic Forum Evaluation***

NDI consultant Dr. William Millsap (U.S.) traveled to Tirana in late October to assist with the final data cleaning and analysis of the Civic Forum evaluation survey fielded in August and September. Working with Millsap, Civic Forum staff developed a list of data trends to analyze from the survey and crafted questions for focus groups to probe findings from the survey and to give depth to the quantitative survey results.

Millsap also trained the field coordinators in conducting focus groups, using role-plays to guide field coordinators in leading focus groups and highlighting the difference between focus groups and discussion groups. Field coordinators in the districts of Tirana and Durres conducted two focus groups each in November, using the questions below.

- 1) Since participating in the Civic Forum program, what have you done to be more involved in the democratic process in your community?
- 2) What have you learned from your participation in Civic Forum that has helped you be more active in your community?
- 3) Many Civic Forum participants indicated in the questionnaire that due to their participation in Civic Forum, they personally are getting others involved in their communities. What are you doing to involve others in your community?
- 4) Is there something about Civic Forum that is not useful to you?

A final evaluation report incorporating findings from the survey and focus groups will be completed in February.

### ***Civic Forum Website Design***

A working group of Civic Forum field coordinators has assembled and begun to formulate a mission and strategic plan for the creation of a Civic Forum website, which would provide information about Civic Forum and its activities and be directed primarily toward a regional audience. NDI anticipates sending a local computer expert to train staff in webpage creation and design in the coming months.

### ***Meetings with International NGOs***

NDI's Civic Forum program continues to communicate, and where possible collaborate, with other organizations whose programs complement its mission and goals. The extensive and unique grassroots network of Civic Forum places the program in an optimal position to collaborate with other community development and political development programs.

In this quarter, NDI Civic Forum field representatives met with representatives of several international NGOs in Tirana to discuss current program activities and points of possible future collaboration. NDI met with representatives of the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), the National Telephone Cooperative Association (NTCA), an association that has developed citizen-owned and operated telephone systems in the rural areas of Poland, and Partners for Democratic Change/Albania (PDC), a recently created NGO that will focus on conflict resolution and capacity building for national NGOs.

Civic Forum field representatives also met with the Urban Institute to discuss plans for the Urban Institute's March 2002 Leadership Workshops for local officials. Civic Forum field coordinators will conduct a train-the-trainers workshop for participants on citizen and grassroots participation in local government. NDI will collaborate with other international groups on the project, including the Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA), Management Systems International (MSI), Kompas, and PDC.

In addition, NDI Civic Forum staff continued to attend monthly coordination meetings with international and local NGOs. Currently the NGO community is seeking clarification on a recently passed NGO law that establishes new but vague guidelines on taxes and other fiscal responsibilities. The coordination group is working to meet with lawyers and government officials who can elaborate the requirements of the new law.

## **Political Party Development Program**

### ***Regional ZHUP Series***

During this quarter, as part of the Regional ZHUP series, NDI conducted its last seminar with the four regional ZHUP groups. It focused on ways to keep party branches active and energized between elections. Former ZHUP participants delivered prepared presentations to the Regional ZHUP participants on membership development, communication and citizen outreach. A total of 52 participants attended four seminars in the regions of Kukes, Tirana and Korca.

Upon completion of the seminar, NDI offered participants the opportunity to sign up for advanced training in 2002. Training topics will include training of trainers, branch development, party outreach and ethics and negotiation. In 2002 NDI will conduct advanced seminars on these topics to enrolled participants.

The evolution of the youth in the electoral campaign has a very positive effect. They are the most active force in succeeding in the process of door-to-door campaigning.

- Participant in Korca

### ***Political Party Leadership Consultations***

During the first week in November, NDI political consultant Roy Dooney conducted consultations with political party leaders to follow up on his March 2001 consultations. During his seven-day visit, he consulted with members of most of the political parties in government, discussed current issues, and conducted training workshops.

Dooney first met with representatives of the Christian Democrat Party to review the election outcome, the difficulties the party encountered during the election and the future of the party. This conversation formed the basis for a subsequent consultation with the Executive Committee, focusing on the committee's analysis of the election, and its perceptions of what had and had not worked from previous sessions with Dooney. NDI encouraged them to use their local authority members as a base for continued work and discussed the party's membership and future role in the Christian Democrat International. The party's main concern appears to be financial, and NDI provided advice on how it might be able to address this issue through sister parties in European Union countries.

During consultations with Dooney, leaders of the Democratic Alliance Party spoke at length about the general state of the party after its poor performance in the election. The party appears to be unsure of where its future lies, and NDI offered to provide information on membership recruitment and strategic planning.

The Human Rights Union Party had also done poorly in the parliamentary election, and during the consultation NDI reviewed with the participants what had been used from pre-election training workshops conducted by the Institute. Also discussed were ways in which a regionally based party can focus on local issues to create a profile.

A consultation with leaders of the Republican Party was constructive, as they expressed their desire to find ways to move the opposition parties out of their parliamentary boycott and toward active participation in normal politics. The members acknowledged that the difficulty the party faced was how to construct a face-saving formula that would allow this to happen. NDI and the participants discussed ways this might be done, some involving party branches and others involving ODIHR technical assistance.

NDI met with representatives from the Social Democratic Party, a party that had performed somewhat poorly in the parliamentary elections. The representatives discussed where the party's future lay, and NDI addressed ways the party could build an identity for itself.

Dooney also conducted a training session with the 15 new members of parliament from the Socialist Party. He addressed ways that MPs could work to build a base in their electoral zones, handle voter expectations, use the media for outreach, and maximize the strength of the party on its work at the local level.

A training session was held for four new members of parliament from the New Democratic Party. Dooney spoke about the role they could play as members of the only parliamentary party in opposition and techniques they could use to increase attention and recognition. He also addressed ways in which they could maximize their impact as a small party and utilize the resources of other groups to help them in their work.

Unfortunately, despite several efforts, the Democratic Party was unavailable to meet or could not be reached.

#### **IV. RESULTS**

##### **Civic Forum**

**Objective:** *Citizens understand and engage in the political process.*

- As a result of requests from participating citizens to establish relationships with other Civic Forum groups, the field coordinators organized and conducted a first-ever large gathering for participants of Civic Forum, which was attended by approximately 150 citizens in Durrës on December 15. All of the preparations for this meeting were undertaken by program staff, and it was a great example of staff taking ownership of the program, being motivated to take initiative and believing enough in their abilities to organize a successful meeting on a scale that had never

been done before. The objectives of the meeting were to give communities an opportunity to share their Civic Forum experiences with other citizens, showcase cooperation among citizens, government and NGOs, and enable citizens to meet across group and district lines.

- Several Tirana area citizen groups have begun to see the effects of long-term advocacy efforts. Zhallher has secured equipment from the Ministry of Health for the local health care center. Unaza worked with the mini-municipality and the electric company to obtain a transformer. Ndroq lobbied the Ministry of Local Government and received furniture for the commune office. Mucaj continues to be vocal in decisionmaking about water problems in the area. Fuchas has begun rehabilitation of its local health center.
- In the area of Durres, Hamallaj installed windows in the primary school with the support of the municipality. Citizens met and took a collection to buy a heater for the classroom, and they continue to lobby the Ministry of Education for new desks

“I’ve talked to other community members and told them, ‘You should do something.’ I’ve sensitized other citizens about garbage. I’ve done a project for the Hamallaj school in cooperation with Hamallaj.”  
 - Civic Forum participant in Manez, Durres District

and chairs for students. The health center group in Manez secured money from the municipality for flowers and shrubs to improve the entryway, and they continue to work with the municipal administration group to develop an awareness campaign about the garbage problem.

- Groups in the Kavaje area are beginning to attend their local council meetings. In Synej citizens attend regularly and receive a journal produced by the commune. In Kryevidh they are kept informed of local government actions and meetings by signs and notices in the local government office, an initiative arranged by the local government after approaches were made by Civic Forum citizens. Civic Forum participants also attend commune council meetings in Kavaje, where they are normally the only citizens in attendance.
- In order to increase political awareness and support the efforts of citizens, Civic Forum published the second issue of its quarterly newsletter, which was subsequently distributed to citizens, national and international organizations and USAID.

## ZHUP

**Objective:** *Approximately 120 emerging political party leaders and activists acquire party building and election preparation skills that favor their development as future political leaders; and*

**Objective:** *Political party outreach to the electorate is strengthened on the basis of increasing levels of participation and responsibility among youth activists in party structures and decision making.*



- ZHUP participants completed and submitted voter outreach projects. This is the first time that these youth leaders have created a systematic plan for reaching out to voters at the local and regional levels.

## **V. EVALUATION**

NDI completed all planned activities for 2001, including a geographical expansion of the Civic Forum program, an exchange with Kosovo Civic Forum staff, and the initiation of the public advocacy phase of the program. NDI also successfully completed the Regional ZHUP training series and has trained more than one hundred activists throughout the country in party development and elections techniques.

In anticipation of the conclusion of the regional cooperative agreement in April 2002, NDI is in discussion with USAID regarding the Institute's follow-on work in both the Civic Forum and ZHUP programs.

## **VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

### **Civic Forum**

- NDI Civic Forum field coordinators will participate in a two-week seminar on leadership development being sponsored by Urban Institute;
- February has been designated "Citizens' Month" and Civic Forum will be working on initiatives that bring together citizens from different groups and encourage collaboration; and
- NDI Civic Forum will create and distribute the third issue of its newsletter.

### **ZHUP**

- Five youth leaders will participate in a regional seminar organized by NDI;
- NDI will evaluate ZHUP voter outreach projects and assist in their implementation; and
- As follow-on to the ZHUP program, NDI will begin training youth activists to be trainers within their parties.